DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 235 052 SO 014 824

TITLE	Alberta. Reference Series No. 26.
INSTITUTION	Department of External Affairs, Ottawa (Ontario).
PUB DATE	80
NOTE	14p.; For related documents, see SO 014 823-833.
AVAILABLE FROM	Any Canadian Embassy/Consulate; or Domestic Information Program Division, Dept. of External Affairs, Ottawa K1A 052, Ontario, Canada.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom Use - Materials (For Learner) (051) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Agricultural Production; Area Studies; Communications; *Cultural Background; Demography; *Economic Development; Educational Practices; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Geographic Location; *Geographic Regions; Health Services; Industry; Land Settlement; *Natural Resources; North American History; Recreational Facilities; Transportation
IDENTIFIERS	*Alberta; Canada Manpower Training Program; Canadian Government; Canadian Studies; PF Project

ABSTRACT

This booklet, one of a series featuring the Canadian provinces, presents a brief overview of Alberta and is suitable for teacher reference or student reading. Separate sections discuss the history and population, the provincial government, the economy, transportation, communications, mineral resources, agriculture, manufacturing, forest products, culture, education, manpower policy and programs, health and social services, recreation and tourism, and future of Alberta. Specific topics include the province's oil production, early Indian and European occupation, population distribution, governmental structure, and growing economic development. A look at Alberta's transportation and communication networks is followed by a discussion of the province's petroleum, natural gas, and coal resources, successful crop and livestock production, and growing petro-chemical and forestry industries. Governmental support for multiculturalism, the arts, education, apprenticeship and employment programs, preventative health services, sports and fitness, and tourism is noted. The final section summarizes the province's optimistic future. In addition, a simple map showing Canada's major cities and provinces is provided. (LH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED235052

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☒ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Dept. of External Affairs

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Alberta

REFERENCE SERIES NO. 26

SØ 014 824

Published by Authority of
the Honourable Mark MacGuigan,
Secretary of State for External Affairs,
Government of Canada, 1980

Produced by
External Information Programs Division,
Department of External Affairs,
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
K1A 0G2

This pamphlet may be freely reproduced either as a whole or in part. Please note its date.

Pamphlets in this series may be obtained from all Canadian embassies, high commissions and consular offices abroad. Requests for copies of *Reference Series* by residents of countries where there are no Canadian representatives should be addressed to the Domestic Information Programs Division, Department of External Affairs, Ottawa K1A 0G2.

Alberta is the fastest growing of Canada's ten provinces. Economic progress, spurred on in recent years by energy developments, is rapidly transforming Alberta into a leading North American economic region.

Alberta's modern era began on February 13, 1947. On that day, 27 kilometres southwest of the city of Edmonton, the oil well known as Leduc No. 1 "came in". The Leduc field yielded 1,300 wells and 200 million barrels of oil and signalled the start of a new period of prosperity for Albertans.

Since 1965, the province's gross domestic product has increased six-fold. The city of Calgary now ranks as the third most important financial centre in Canada, after Toronto and Montreal. In 1978, new house construction in Alberta was roughly equal to that of the five most eastern provinces.

History and population

It was not until the latter half of the nineteenth century that European residents began to build permanent settlements in Alberta. The first European settlers to arrive were fur traders and missionaries. Before that, the only inhabitants were the nomadic Indian tribes, which included the Cree, the Blackfoot, the Assiniboine, the Sarcee and the Chipewyan. Two major events — the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway and the arrival in 1874 of the North West Mounted Police — contributed to stability in the region.

Alberta was originally an area of the Northwest Territories, created when Canada purchased Rupert's Land from the Hudson's Bay Company. It became a province of Canada in 1905. Of its present population of 1,971,600, approximately 45 per cent trace their ethnic origins to the British Isles. The rest of the population claims ancestry in the following proportions: German 14 per cent; Ukrainian and Polish 11 per cent; Scandinavian 7 per cent; and French 6 per cent.

The largest religious denomination in Alberta is the United Church of Canada which was formed in 1925 by a union of Methodists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists. Also well represented are Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Baptists, Mormons and members of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Many non-Christian faiths are represented as well.

During the past few years, a drastic change in population concentration occurred in Alberta. In 1931, 22 per cent resided in Edmonton and Calgary; today, these two cities have 50 per cent of the province's population. Of the three prairie provinces, Alberta has had the greatest influx of settlers since 1931. Today, new inhabitants are arriving at the rate of about 4,000 a month.

Provincial government

The Alberta government, like the federal government, has inherited the traditions of British parliamentary democracy. The Alberta legislature comprises 79 elected representatives. There is no upper house in the provincial government.

The Cabinet is responsible to the provincial legislature. The premier and his Cabinet ministers are all elected Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) and ministers must answer to the legislature for their department's activities. The lieutenant-governor is the Queen's representative in Alberta and is appointed by Canada's governor general.

The Progressive Conservative Party of Alberta has formed the government since 1971. The Conservatives were elected to their present term in office in February 1979, winning a majority of seats (74 of 79). The official opposition is the Social Credit Party with four seats. There is also one New Democratic Party MLA.

The Alberta tax regime is the most moderate in Canada. The government places no tax on retail sales or gasoline and imposes the nation's lowest rate of personal income tax. The corporate income tax rate is also among the lowest in the country. This favourable tax system has been made possible by the large oil and natural gas revenues accruing to the provincial government.

Another result of the energy boom has been the Heritage Savings Trust Fund, established in 1976 by the government of Premier Peter Lougheed. The goals of the Heritage Fund are to improve the quality of life for Albertans and to invest for expansion and diversification of the provincial economy. Each year 30 per cent of Alberta's receipts in royalties from non-renewable resources go into the Trust Fund, which now totals over $4.5 billion.

The economy

Alberta's gross domestic product for 1978 exceeded $25.4 billion, compared with $4.29 billion in 1965. Allowing for inflation, this represents an annual growth rate of 6.4 per cent.

Investment in Alberta continues at a rapid pace. Estimated total private and public investment for 1978 amounted to $8.4 billion. In *per capita* terms this represents $4,238, well above the Canadian average.

Transportation

The Alberta economy has always been closely linked with the development of a transportation network because the province is landlocked and distant from major markets. The land area is 661,000 square kilometres and the province's varied geographical features — from rugged mountains to prairie, from forest to muskeg — pose unique transportation

problems. Modern transportation, however, combined with the increasing value of Alberta's resources, has been a primary factor in the economic transformation of recent years.

There are over 11,000 kilometres of paved highways and roads in the province and 128,000 kilometres of local and secondary roads.

Five railway companies serve Alberta: the Canadian National Railways, Canadian Pacific Railway, Northern Alberta Railway, the Alberta Resources Railway and the Great Slave Lake Railway. There are a total of 11,000 kilometres of line in operation.

Air transportation has been vital in the development of Alberta by providing links to remote or inaccessible areas. Today, the province has 58 licensed airports, 19 heliports, one seaplane base and many unlicensed airports. More than 2,700 aircraft are registered in the province.

Two major airlines, Canadian Pacific and Air Canada, also serve the province with scheduled regional, national and international passenger and air-freight services. Pacific Western Airlines, recently acquired by the Alberta government, is the major regional carrier, especially into the North.

There is river transportation on the Athabasca and Slave Rivers, which, during the summer months, serve mining and exploration companies in the Arctic. Transportation by barge (1,400-tonne capacity) is possible from Fort McMurray to Tuktoyaktuk on the coast of the Arctic Ocean, a distance of 2,700 kilometres.

Communications

Radio and television, both public and private, reach all parts of the province. There are 109 AM and FM radio stations, 115 television and rebroadcast stations and expanding cable television systems in major centres. Nine daily newspapers and more than 140 weekly newspapers are published in Alberta. The dailies have circulations totalling 450,000 (80 per cent of all households) and the weeklies, over 620,000. In addition, there is a growing magazine-publishing trade.

Alberta Government Telephone is the largest telephone system in Alberta, with 1.5 million telephones in service. Albertans are among Canada's greatest telephone users. Other communications systems include a microwave network, two large teletype systems and a wire service.

The more remote regions of northern Alberta benefit from the communications satellite ANIK, through which the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (the public national radio and television network) is able to broadcast its programs to

over 95 per cent of the Canadian population.

Mineral resources

Alberta has vast deposits of fossil fuels — oil, natural gas, oil sands and coal. The value of mineral production in 1978 was estimated at $9.7 billion. Fossil fuels make up most of this total. In addition, swift-flowing rivers draining into the Arctic Ocean and eastward to Hudson Bay are a substantial hydro-electric power source.

Although crude oil and natural gas have been produced for local consumption for many decades, the largest and most prolific oilfields have been discovered during the past 30 years. Alberta contains over 70 per cent of Canada's remaining recoverable reserves of conventional crude oil, amounting to 5.6 billion barrels, excluding frontier reserves. Most of these reserves are in the central and northwestern part of the province. In addition to conventional crude oil, Alberta natural gas fields contain some 800 million barrels (110 million tonnes) of recoverable reserves.

Production of Alberta crude oil and equivalent liquids is approximately one million barrels a day. Of this amount, 18 per cent is consumed in Alberta, 49 per cent in other provinces (primarily Ontario), and 33 per cent is exported to refineries in the northern United States.

Vast reserves of synthetic crude oil are also recoverable from Alberta's oil sands and heavy oil deposits. The oil-bearing sands underlie four large areas in northern Alberta and are estimated to contain more than 950 million barrels (137 million tonnes) of oil.

The largest oil sands deposit is in northeastern Alberta, adjacent to the Athabasca River, where the beds are exposed to the surface. The Athabasca area contains some 600 billion barrels (97 billion tonnes) of oil. Two plants, Great Canadian Oil Sands Ltd. and Syncrude Canada Ltd., are producing some 100,000 barrels a day of high grade synthetic oil.

Present estimates show that Alberta's annual production of synthetic crude oil will reach 180 million barrels (25 million tonnes) by 1985.

Abundant deposits of natural gas are found in many areas of Alberta. Total remaining recoverable reserves are estimated at 52 trillion cubic feet (Tcf), with ultimate recoverable reserves estimated at some 110 Tcf. Daily production is now about 5.8 billion cubic feet. Of this total, 20 per cent is consumed in Alberta, 42 per cent shipped to other Canadian provinces and 38 per cent exported to the United States.

Alberta's electric power grid reaches all but the most remote areas of the province. Operated by private utility companies and municipalities, the grid transports electricity generated by hydro plants and by plants fuelled by coal and natural gas. The hydroelectric component of this grid is provided by several power plants on major Alberta rivers in the Rocky Mountains and Foothills.

While petroleum and natural gas have dominated Alberta energy for 25 years, the province's vast coal resources are once more the subject of intensive exploration and development. Extending under much of the southern and central plains region of the province and west into the Rocky Mountains, Alberta's coal deposits provide an abundant source of primary energy or, alternatively, a feedstock for synthetic fuels and petrochemicals.

Alberta's coal production exceeds 11 million tonnes a year, of which approximately 60 per cent is subbituminous coal used largely for thermal power generation, and 40 per cent high grade metallurgical coal for export, mainly to Japan. The remaining recoverable reserves of Alberta coal are conservatively estimated at 10 billion tonnes.

Among other mineral resources in Alberta are various construction minerals (limestone, clay, sand and gravel), salt, sulphur and iron ore.

Agriculture

Land is another of Alberta's important natural resources. Over 20 million hectares are used in crop and livestock production with approximately one-half classified as cultivated. It is estimated that another nine million hectares could be added to farmland inventory.

With this much prime agricultural land, it is not surprising that Alberta has developed a very productive agricultural economy, and the province produces 20 per cent of the total Canadian agricultural output. Export marketing of Alberta's agricultural products is of major importance because of the province's relatively small population.

To meet the challenges of world markets, Alberta farmers have been quick to diversify production. Rapeseed, for example, which was virtually unknown in Alberta 20 years ago, is now produced in excess of 20 million bushels.

Alberta-produced wheat, which is sold through the federal Canadian Wheat Board to more than 40 countries, is of the highest quality. Over two million hectares are devoted to wheat production, with total yield exceeding 183 million bushels. Three-quarters of this is exported.

Several thousand head of dairy and beef cattle, as well as several million dollars worth of semen, have been sold in many parts of the world by Alberta cattle producers. Alberta-

produced honey is rated among the best in the world, averaging nine million kilograms each year, or 40 per cent of annual Canadian production.

The trend in Alberta is to larger, more efficient farms, achieved largely by consolidating existing operations. Average farm size has increased from 220 hectares to 320 hectares in the past 20 years.

Alberta maintains the largest livestock population of Canada's western provinces, accounting for 48 per cent of cattle and calves, 46 per cent of the hogs and 55 per cent of sheep and lambs.

Vegetable crops such as carrots, turnips, potatoes, green peppers and tomatoes and related industrial opportunities have been developed in southern Alberta where the high summer temperatures, a long growing season and irrigation contribute to a productive growing season.

Manufacturing

Alberta's vast potential for manufacturing is just starting to be realized. Factory shipments between January and October 1979 were $7 billion.

By order of importance, the manufacturing sectors are: agriculture and food processing, petroleum refining, the petrochemical industries, the metal fabricating industries, the wood industries, transportation equipment and machinery.

The development of a petrochemical industry in Alberta began in the early 1940s with the construction of Canada's first ammonia plant. The second wave of petrochemical development occurred in the early 1950s and followed the discovery in Alberta of the large reserves of crude oil and natural gas. The next stage occurred in the late 1950s and early 1960s and was characterized by the intermittent establishment of ammonia-based fertilizer plants, certain specialty chemicals and the establishment of inorganic chemical manufacturing facilities.

In the past few years renewed interest has been shown in Alberta as a petrochemical location. The Alberta government has actively promoted the development of a petrochemical base to upgrade the province's resources. Ethylene, ammonia, urea and methanol are now produced locally.

Forest products

Forests cover 60 per cent of the province, a proportion that has changed little since 1869, when the Hudson's Bay Company territories were acquired by the Government of Canada.

The forests of Alberta contain a net merchantable volume of timber totalling 1.7 billion cubic metres, permitting an allowable annual cut of 28 million cubic metres. Because actual harvesting now totals only four million cubic metres annually, a potential increase in harvesting of several times current levels is possible while still maintaining the net volume of timber in the forests.

Culture

Alberta, a multicultural province, offers a large number of cultural activities. Diverse ethnic groups have brought their own traditions with them and are encouraged to maintain and develop their cultural heritage.

The province has an official policy of multiculturalism and all ethnic groups in Alberta can receive support for cultural activities. The Alberta government has generous programs to support the visual, performing and literary arts as well as museums and historic sites. The two major museums are the Glenbow Institute of Calgary and the Provincial Museum in Edmonton.

Alberta's cultural agencies and groups have also benefited in recent years from federal government support, through such agencies as the Canada Council.

Education

In Canada, education is a provincial responsibility. Basic education (Grades 1-12) in Alberta comes under the jurisdiction of the provincial Department of Education and is available free to all Alberta children. Adult retraining and higher education come under the Department of Advanced Education and Manpower. Modest fees are charged for some higher education and adult retraining courses.

The advanced education system in Alberta utilizes: public universities (the Universities of Alberta and Calgary are the principal ones); provincial technical institutes; community colleges; provincial vocational centres; trade schools under government supervision; and other specialized schools.

Universities offer degree programs to the bachelor, master's and doctorate levels, as well as professional studies in such areas as medicine, law and dentistry. Six public colleges offer general education and community service courses, as well as one-year certificates and two-year diploma programs leading to vocational careers. Several provide university transfer courses.

Both the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) and the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT) offer two-year technical, industrial, business and vocational programs, as well as apprenticeship training. SAIT also incorporates the Alberta College of Art, which offers one- to four-year programs in studies such as painting, sculpture and ceramics.

Technical/vocational training aimed at developing occupational skills is available through adult vocational centres in most major cities and towns. In addition to academic upgrading, these centres provide short and intensive employment courses and basic English for immigrants. There are also about 65 private trade schools operating under government supervision.

The Banff School of Fine Arts is a residential centre with a renowned reputation for education in the visual and performing arts such as music, drama, ballet and painting. The centre also has schools in management and environmental studies.

Manpower policy and programs

The Department of Advanced Education and Manpower, which tries to ensure full employment in the province, provides three basic services: regulating and administering the training and certification of tradesmen through the apprenticeship and journeyman levels; identifying and meeting short- and long-term manpower needs and helping individuals to plan and prepare for the transition from training to work to retirement.

The apprenticeship and certification programs cover 39 designated trades. Alberta Career Centres provide career information, vocational and educational counselling, testing and referrals for training. Manpower Mobility offices in Edmonton, Toronto, and London, England, recruit individuals to meet labour needs which cannot be met locally.

The provincial and federal governments work in close co-operation under the terms of the Adult Occupational Training Agreement. This agreement provides financial support for on-the-job and training-in-industry programs, for upgrading and retraining the work force, and for initial training for specific skills. The provincial government has parallel legislation to provide financial assistance to students who are proceeding through post-secondary education and training but who are not eligible for federal government support.

Health and social services

The Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan provides basic health and hospitalization coverage for all citizens. Coverage includes the services of general practitioners,

medical specialists, osteopaths, optometrists, chiropractors and podiatrists. Special subsidized rates are available for low-income individuals and families. All senior citizens and their dependants are provided with free coverage for hearing aids, eye glasses, dental work and dentures and some prescribed medical appliances under the Extended Care Benefits Plan.

Preventive health services are provided by 27 local health authorities and two city health departments. Services, which are free, may include pre-natal classes; children's clinics; immunization programs; family planning and family life education; dental services; health inspection to enforce housing, food and water regulations; speech and audiology services; and home care, including nursing, rehabilitation, home-making, meals and other support services.

Recreation and tourism

The Department of Recreation, Parks and Wildlife provides funding and professional guidance to local governments, private organizations and recreation associations. It encourages participation in outdoor activities and an appreciation of nature. By supporting sports and fitness it helps to improve the calibre of athletes and to encourage wider public participation in sports.

Dinosaur Provincial Park in southern Alberta has become increasingly well-known among researchers in many parts of the world for discoveries of dinosaur fossils. This growing recognition was confirmed in October 1979, when the World Heritage Committee of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization named the park to the World Heritage List. It joins three other Canadian sites on the List: Nahanni National Park in the Northwest Territories; L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Park in Newfoundland; and Kluane National Park in the Yukon.

Alberta was the first province to establish provincial parks in urban areas. Fish Creek Park in Calgary and Capital City Park in Edmonton are designed to give city residents easy access to recreational and park facilities. In addition, provincial parks and wilderness sites have been set aside to preserve natural areas for future generations.

Alberta is a logical destination for tourists because of its natural endowments. They include the world-famous Banff and Jasper National Parks, set in the Canadian Rockies, and an extensive system of provincial parks. In addition, such annual events as the Calgary Stampede and Edmonton's Klondike Days attract many visitors each summer.

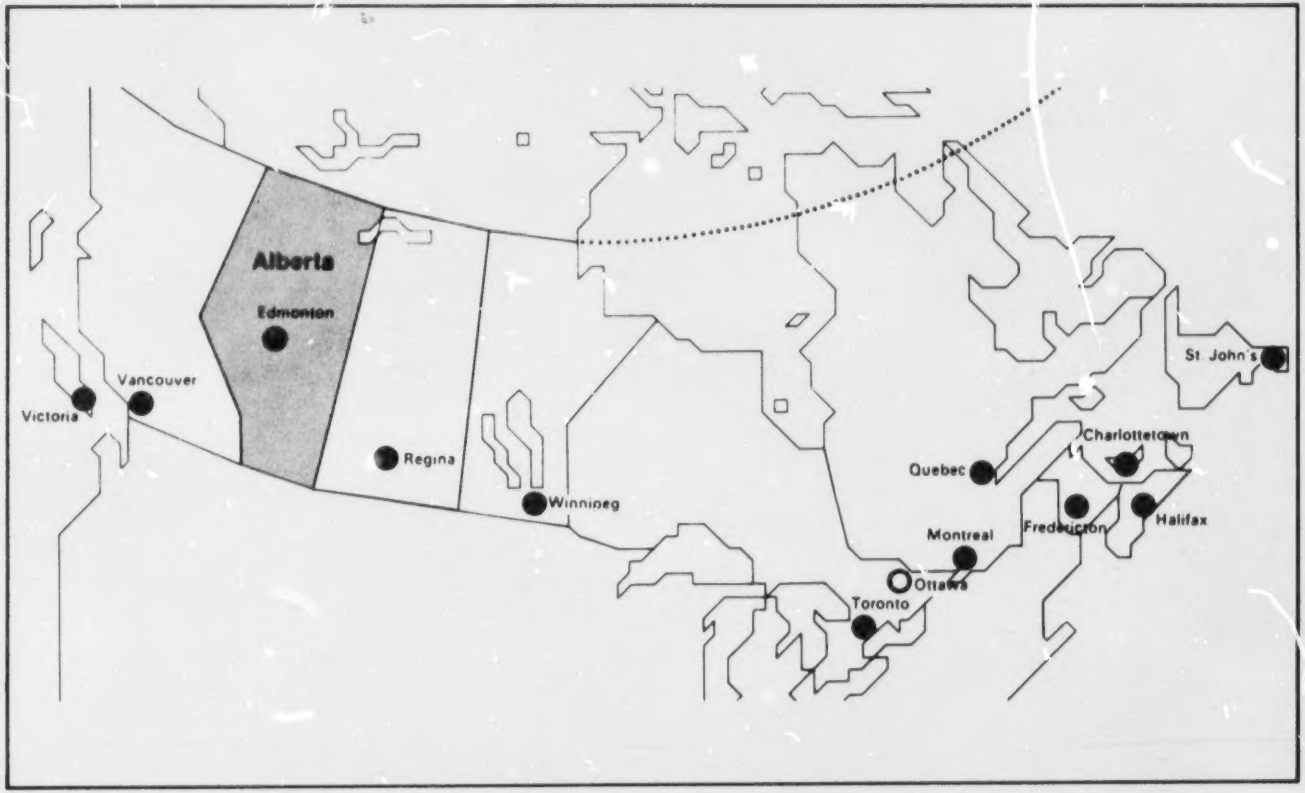
Alberta's travel industry generated an estimated $1 billion in revenue during 1979. With an average annual increase of 13 per cent from 1971 to 1979, the industry has experienced healthy growth and is increasingly important to the economy.

Alberta's future

The province's wealth of resources, indicate that Alberta's strength and potential will be a long-term, rather than a fleeting phenomenon.

Future economic development, particularly that of the largely untapped non-conventional energy resources, will bring the challenges and opportunities to make the most of the province's great potential.

13


Alberta
Edmonton
Vancouver
Victoria
Regina
Winnipeg
Quebec
Montreal
Ottawa
Toronto
Fredericton
Charlottetown
Halifax
St. John's